



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MS-13 GANG LEADER SENTENCED TO 71 MONTHS IN PRISON *ICE Operation "Community Shield" targets gang members*

COLUMBUS, Ohio — An illegal alien from El Salvadoran was sentenced here yesterday to 71 months in prison for his conviction in the Ohio Court of Common Pleas for carrying a concealed weapon, and his guilty plea for Re-entry after Deportation in the U.S. District Court, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Nelson Flores, 34, aka "El Mula" or "The Mule," and aka "David Aguilar," was arrested by Columbus Police Dec. 23 after a minor traffic accident when he was identified as having been previously deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Columbus Police discovered his criminal background by contacting the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC).

The LESC confirmed Flores' true identity through fingerprints and photographs. The LESC provides local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies with real-time immigration status and identity information on aliens suspected, arrested, or convicted of criminal activity, 24-hours-per day, 365 days a year.

ICE special agents identified Flores as a violent, previously deported felon gang leader who had been convicted of assault with a deadly weapon, and for participating in a drive-by shooting in Nevada. ICE placed a detainer placed on Flores at the time of his traffic accident, which enabled Columbus Police to lawfully detain him. At the same time, ICE Columbus special agents were instructed to respond and arrest Flores. Re-entering the U.S. after having previously been deported is a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

"This is case is a textbook example of how ICE special agents, local law enforcement, and our prosecutors effectively work together to help rid our cities and communities from the scourge street gang known as MS-13," said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations. "The sentence imposed on Nelson Flores by the Courts sends a strong and clear message to those involved with criminal streets gangs, and particularly to its leaders, that they will pay a significant price for disregarding this country's immigration laws, and for the crimes they

commit as part of their violent gang lifestyle. In addition to conducting the investigation that is sending Flores to federal prison, ICE will be waiting for him upon his release to make sure he is ultimately removed from the United States."

Flores appeared before the Honorable Judge James Graham, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Ohio. Assistant U.S. Attorney Marcia Harris, U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Ohio prosecuted this case.

Investigative assistance was provided by the Columbus Police Department, Strategic Response/Gang Bureau.

Flores' apprehension occurred just before ICE began its crackdown on MS-13 gang members. Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative intended to disrupt, dismantle, and assist in the criminal prosecution of violent gangs by employing the full range of authorities available to ICE.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield in February by specifically targeting MS-13, which is one of the most violent street gangs in the country. ICE expanded the initiative in May to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of this second phase, ICE's Operation Community Shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation's communities.

ICE uses its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting gang-related narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of illegally derived assets.

Operation Community Shield involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or deport individual gang members.

To report suspicious activity, members of the public are encouraged to call the ICE hotline at: 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.